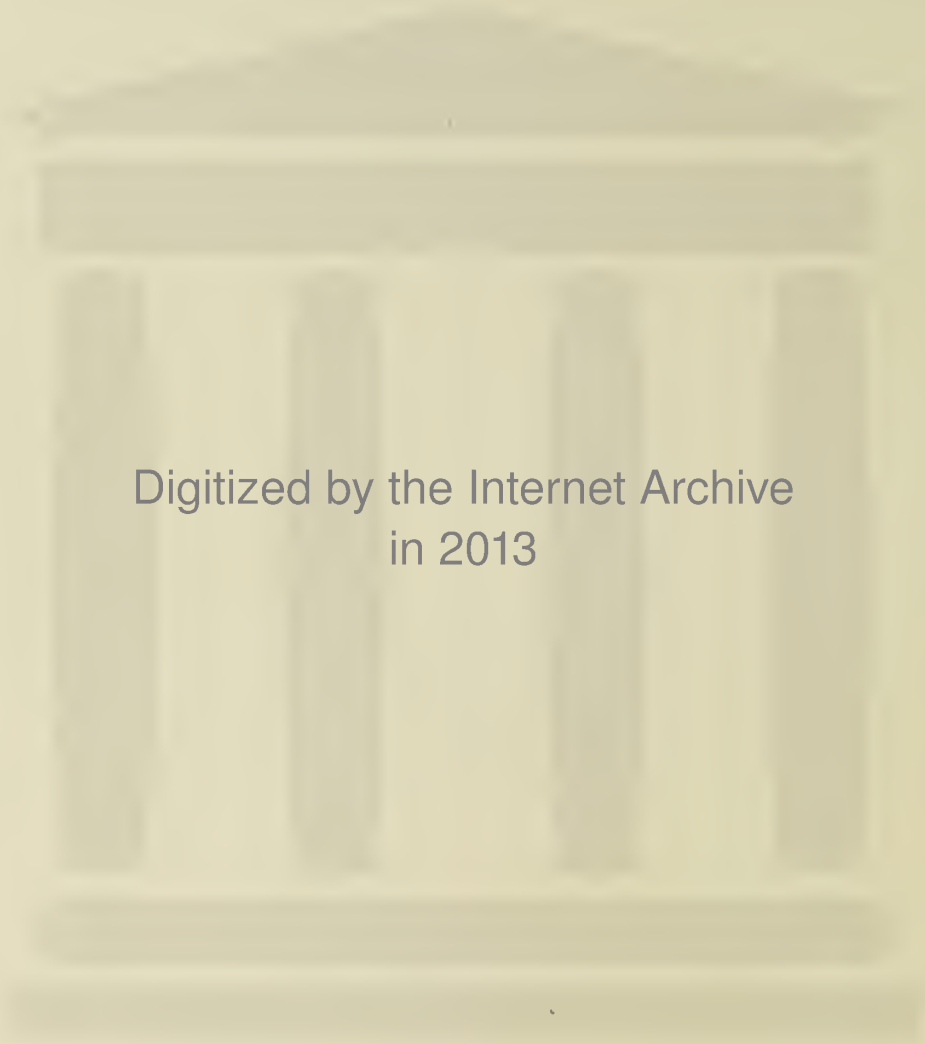
HOMER MARTIN

By FRANK JEWETT MATHER, Jr.


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H.B. Martin 1895

THE HARP OF THE WINDS

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Signed and dated 1895, canvas, 28¼ inches high, 40 inches wide.

HOMER MARTIN
POET IN LANDSCAPE

BY

FRANK JEWETT MATHER, JR.



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PREFACE

MRS. MARTIN'S "Homer Martin: a Reminiscence" (New York: William Macbeth, 1904), is so charmingly written and so adequate on the personal side that only weighty reasons can justify a return to the theme. Such reasons are found in the increasing interest in Homer Martin's work, in the lapse of years that makes a critical estimate more possible, and in the discovery of new biographical material. I have depended much on the "Reminiscence," though, being written chiefly from memory, it contains a number of slips in chronology. Wherever this book is at variance with it, documentary material justifies the divergence. Without the generous aid of Martin's surviving friends and the coöperation of owners of his pictures, this book could not have been undertaken. W. C. Brownell, Montgomery Schuyler and Edward Gay have kindly communicated indispensable recollections and points of view. Messrs. Thomas B. Clarke and John Du Fais of New York, and Dr. Montgomery Mosher of Albany have lent me precious sheaves of Martin's letters. Mr. William Macbeth put at my disposal his large collection of sketches, which are about the only evidence for the painter's artistic origins and early movements; and contributed with unfailing

obligingness much information that could have been got from no other source. My debt to other correspondents and to the scanty literature on the subject is expressed in these pages at the proper places. No enumeration of the many collectors who have permitted access to their homes and photographing of their treasures can here be made. Every illustration in the book and nearly every mention of a picture in the text may be taken as a grateful recognition of such a courtesy.

F. J. M., Jr.

Princeton, N. J.
April, 1912

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HOMER MARTIN

PART ONE

WHISTLER once introduced his friend Homer Martin in these words: "Gentlemen, this is Homer Martin. He doesn't look as if he were, but he is." Martin's doubtless adequate retort has not been preserved, but the quip must have cut. Precisely this not looking what he was was a lifelong disadvantage. Careless and positively untidy in dress, eccentric in gait, his face cruelly marred by a chronic eczema, Homer Martin certainly did not look the sensitive artist. His friend George Boughton used to say rather cynically that he couldn't afford to have Homer about the studio, so deterrent was his effect upon conventionally minded British patrons.

Had Martin chosen to win these Philistines, he need only have spoken. As to his talk there is only one opinion. Golden, unexpected sayings flowed from him unfailingly. Wherever there was good talk he was easily first. The best minds waited eagerly for his utterance; the servants at his club and the children of his friends delighted in it. Inert or conventional people, however, were often appalled by his flights. No neutral attitude in his regard was possible. The best masculine society New York offered was at his feet,

and he cared little for any other. He loved a conviviality that permitted a fine Rabelaisianism. Constraint, other than that of his own fastidious taste, was irksome to him. Thus, while his friends included the foremost physicians, journalists and critics in New York, among this *élite* he preferred men of essential simplicity whose outlook upon reality was genial, wide and fearless.

Such men still regard his friendship as a patent of nobility. One and all they agree that his wit is incommunicable, growing as it did out of the occasion. "It cannot be decanted" Montgomery Schuyler writes me, and I recall Emerson's account of Thoreau's conversation as "a continual coining of the present moment." Yes, the best of Homer Martin—those "cosy studio and tavern times" lovingly hinted at in Elihu Vedder's autobiography—is irrecoverable. But certain retorts have survived which faintly suggest the sudden flash from the blue. To a patron urgent for a "poetic" title for a lovely wood interior Martin grunted, "Oh! it's the Home of the Telegraph Pole." Once when asked how he liked a new ceiling design in his club—a pattern, as he saw, of wriggling ineptitude—he affected a dazed expression and, parodying a popular refrain, hummed, "Wait till the ceiling rolls by." A whole architectural criticism might be woven about that text. A friend asked him to paint something on the Fifth Symphony of Beethoven, and the response was, "Paint God?" But Martin did one of his serenest masterpieces with the piano partition of the great an-

dante sounding in his ears. One of his dicta has become classic, at least among the large and respectable public of beer lovers. A lady, alluding to his well-known foible, asked if he didn't drink too much beer. "Madame, there *is* not too much beer" was his monumental rejoinder. Worthy also of proverbial currency is his pathetic explanation of a ruinous sale to a mean buyer —"He had me by the slack of the belly." This was a hold that adversity had not infrequently upon Homer Martin. Generally his wit, a true product of companionship, was instinct with good nature, but it could cut as well. Standing in front of the Tenth Street Studios, where he worked for about seventeen years, he was asked what a neighboring big building was. "It's a half-orphan asylum" was the answer," and this," turning back to the studios, "is a half-artist asylum."

The wit that made him the center of a choice circle isolated him from his fellow artists. Except for a few like the taciturn Winslow Homer and the many-sided La Farge, he cared little for their company, and they cared as little for his work. Aside from his membership in our three chief exhibiting societies, I cannot find that Homer Martin ever received any prize or similar honor from the craft he adorned. His fellows hardly knew how to take him. His fastidious spirit was as alien to the random Bohemianism of the seventies as his painting was mysterious to those who still held the faith as taught at Düsseldorf. He did things that were not done by National Academicians—left

things out or merely indicated them, slurred local color for general tone. Skies were by definition blue, and his often displayed an unmistakable vibrant green. Worst of all he openly scoffed at established pictorial dignitaries and unblushingly admired the flimsy and superficial Corot. In short he early acquired an Ishmaelite repute in the *mètier* which he never took the pains to reverse. They thought him something of an amateur, and still his fame remains a bit mysterious to surviving colleagues who measure technical accomplishment by the consecrated standards of the schools. During his lifetime he generally passed as a rather formidable eccentric. His glory was esoteric. The same group that loved him and his talk loved his pictures and bought them or saw that others did. Thus the slack of the belly was periodically taken up, and wit and pictures were forthcoming for many a year.

Since Homer Martin was possibly even more remarkable as a man than as a painter, it has seemed well to present this thin shadow-picture of him before proceeding to the more consistent chronicle of his artistic development. And here it should be said that the Puck-like tricksiness of the man dropped away the moment he began to paint. The cleverest of his contemporaries, there is absolutely no cleverness in his pictures; just breathless, painstaking reverence. In his rarely poetical evocations of nature he seldom seems wholly at his ease. There is a sense of dread lest the mood may fail or the hand betray it. He

often seems to fumble delicately for his effects, as Gray did in poetry. Pensiveness is his peculiar note, and reticence. I cannot wholly agree with Sadakichi Hartmann that Homer Martin "makes use of landscape to express his own weariness and bitterness," but evidently he never attained that roving, royal familiarity with nature which is the mark, say, of Inness. How the highly specialized and sublimated mood and vision of Homer Martin grew out of native bent and moulding circumstance is the subject of my inquiry.

PART TWO

HOMER DODGE MARTIN was born in Albany, N. Y., October 28th, 1836, the youngest of four children of Homer Martin and Sarah Dodge. His father, a man of Lincolnian worth and simplicity, was of good New England stock and a carpenter by trade. His mother, being of an old Albany family, had greater pretensions to gentility. She was a masterful woman, possessing in crude form that love of good books and good pictures which distinguished her youngest son. Both parents were devout Methodists, but the father, essentially a mild man, willingly left militant piety to his wife. Edward Gay still remembers how the scandalized matron once dispersed a young folks' dance that had been improvised at home in her absence.

Young Homer began to draw in infancy. A pencil and paper, his mother later told his wife, was from his twentieth month, a sure way to pacify him. Through

a desultory schooling that ended in his thirteenth year, the boy kept to his sketching. At the paternal carpenter's bench the lad soon proved his incapacity, and was put in a shop. There, by design or from native dislike of the clerkly amenities, he affronted old customers and repelled new ones. He passed next into the office of a cousin who was an architect and builder. Here young Homer made his first creditable exit. Through a congenital defect of sight he could not draw verticals with assurance, and there probably were other good reasons why he did not shine as a mechanical draughtsman. In these apparently futile years, however, the boy had matured. By some odd chance a copy of Volney's "Ruins" fell into his hands. The first revelation was of the absurdity of the sectarianism to which he had been bred, the permanent result was a tough-minded scepticism by which he lived and died.

Within three years Homer had failed as carpenter, clerk and architect's assistant. At this point the sculptor E. D. Palmer took a hand and insisted that the lad be permitted to succeed in his evident vocation. Palmer was deservedly a great figure in Albany. To beginners like George H. Boughton, Launt Thompson, the sculptor; and especially to poor boys like Edward Gay and Homer Martin, Palmer was a beacon light. For had he not from an artisan's beginnings attained national repute? Moreover Palmer took his position as dean of the Albany artists with benign seriousness. Evening after evening he appeared in the back shop of Annesley and Vint, art

dealers and colormen, to talk with all comers. Besides the youngsters already mentioned, James and William Hart, both esteemed landscape painters, would occasionally attend. At what was virtually an artist's club, the talk was free and inspiring. Of the younger men Boughton and Martin were easily the leading spirits. Boughton was then far the best painter of the lot and the most judicious wit, Martin had already developed his gift for gentle mystification and monstrous paradox. He dominated the group. After the venerable Palmer had withdrawn, the session was often continued more boisterously into the night, at Taylor's or some other accredited dispensary of the excellent cream ale of the Hudson.

Albany evidently supplied that comradeship which is indispensable to most artists, and it supplied as well loyal patronage. The tone of the State Capital had been set when politics was still an aristocratic pursuit. Solid old families of good Dutch and English extraction had gradually accumulated wealth while preserving traditional good manners and increasing an unpretentious culture. The Albanians were proud of their artists—of the Scotch brothers Hart who had risen from coach painting, of the gracious and venerable Palmer whose studio became a local wonder, of the whole set of ambitious youngsters who met at Annesley's. The Albanians bought pictures gladly without questioning the price. They even afforded a limited opportunity for a manner of mural painting. Walter Palmer writes that it was a custom to set a large land-

scape above the mantel in the place often occupied by a mirror, and that most of the larger oblong canvases of the Harts and of Homer Martin were painted with such decorative intent. Whatever courtesy and generosity could do for her artist group Albany did. Criticism she could not provide, and the terrible defect of an artistic apprenticeship there was the lack of fine examples. The sentimental softness of the leading painters, the Harts, was, to put it gently, unexemplary. Even the boys made fun of the Harts on the sly. Albany was only too devoted to her local school, and I doubt if anything so good as a Durand or an early Inness was set in any chimney-piece. Of the Albany group only the precocious Boughton showed any instinctive intelligence for the craft. His method of limiting the palette and working in harmonious tones of brown and green seemed a kind of recreancy to the variety of nature. He was well-to-do, began to travel early, was settled in London by 1861, and thus deprived his group of a natural leader. There exist a few landscapes painted by Homer Martin in the fifties which, but for the signature would seem too preposterously bad ever to have come even from his juvenile hand. They are of a poisonous autumnal garishness. It cannot have been for such daubs that Palmer stood sponsor for him. Certain pencil drawings of rocks and trees, fine and delicately strong, must have settled the matter. Palmer's taste and wisdom were strikingly shown in his hopeful verdict on such slender evidence.

At sixteen the untrained boy Homer Martin was a

titular artist. A few years later he had his studio in the Museum Building, hired from James Hart, whose tutelage he evaded within a fortnight, entering independently upon his single brief period of prosperity. Since he once called a forest lake by Hart "a scene of niggled magnitude," it is plain that the lad's eyes were already open to those problems of scale and space which later preoccupied him. Martin frankly accepted the traditional scenic ideal of landscape painting and always remained faithful to it. An intimacy which involved narrowing the view or isolating a single object he seldom practiced. By generalization and fine color he actually realized what had been merely the ambition of Durand and Cole. Thus Martin's landscape painting was the artistic fulfilling of the American mode through selection, just as Bierstadt's and Church's were a kind of grandiose reduction to the absurd through over-explicitness. In his love of wide, well-balanced spaces Homer Martin seems to have gone back to the authentic pioneer of the scenic genre Claude. In insisting upon this scenic and traditional quality of Martin's work I have run far beyond his Albany accomplishment. But the matter justifies such an anticipation. Homer Martin has thoughtlessly been regarded as a minor follower of the men of 1830. In a far truer sense Inness and Wyant may be regarded as proselytes of Barbizon. Precisely what separates Homer Martin from men who, like Corot and Boudin, profoundly influenced him is this preference for wide spaces and for the generalized elegiac

mood which these evoke. It is said that he coined the phrase "The Hudson River School." If so, it would have been only half in jest, for he was introspective enough to realize that he himself was the last and greatest expression of that discredited movement.

To return to the studio in the Museum Building, Homer Martin's canvases of about 1860 are meanly painted, small in touch, and thin in texture, but they already begin to show fine and simple arrangements—a genuine scenic sense, and at least the intention of large and simple masses of balancing color. Of his movements in the first productive years little is known. Edward Gay recalls a tramping trip through the Catskills and an occasion when Homer wheedled a dinner out of a farmer by representing two hungry boys as scientific farmers in search of a domain. Some early sketches indicate an acquaintance with the nearer Adirondacks about North Creek; and probably with Lake George and Lake Champlain. His first exhibits, in the National Academy of 1857, were of subjects at Salisbury in the Connecticut Berkshires. "Sage's Ravine" and "Twin Lakes" were the titles. To these lake and mountain subjects he constantly returned; some of the masterpieces of his last rally were based on these earliest observations. Of mountains he once constituted himself the champion against the great Dr. Holmes, who had written in the "Autocrat" that they were unfriendly. Homer Martin wrote asking the Autocrat to visit an exhibition of his own sketches then on in Boston and be convinced of the friendliness

THE OLD MILL

COLLECTION OF LYMAN A. MILLS

Signed and dated on a boulder 1860, canvas, 30 inches high, 56 inches wide.

MOUNT JEFFERSON AND MOUNT ADAMS

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Signed and dated 1868, canvas, 30 inches high, 40 inches wide.





of mountains. One may assume that the kindly essayist went, but the incident has left no trace in his published memoirs.

We have seen this young painter groping under disadvantages for something like rhythm in design and distinction in acquaintance. Suddenly there came to him a share in the greater rhythms; he fell in love. Elizabeth Gilbert Davis was his superior in education, culture and position, and through thirty-five years of wedded life remained his superior in moral poise. He saw her on the street, made acquaintance with her brother—both were frequenters of the Philharmonic concerts—and contrived that she should visit his studio. The sequel must be told in the words of Mrs. Martin's admirable "Reminiscence" of her husband.

> "The studio," she writes, "struck me as the most untidy room I had ever entered. I remember his rushing to throw things behind a large screen. I was not used to paintings. Such as I had seen had seemed to me mere daubs to which any good engraving would be altogether preferable. But on that afternoon there was a large unfinished landscape on the easel, which even to my unpractised eye conveyed the promise of beauty. There were two great boulders lifting their heads out of a shallow foreground brook, and one day, much later, when I was there, he painted his own initials on one of them, and mine on the other."

With this picture called "The Old Mill" we shall in due time make acquaintance.

They were married on the 21st of June, 1861. Their honeymoon began at Twin Lakes in the Connecticut Berkshires and continued in a friendly farmhouse among the upper Taconics at Fort Ann, N. Y. The match seemed veritably made in heaven. She was much that he meant to be. A vivid creature, admired by his brilliant New York comrades, her bent was chiefly literary. Edward Gay still tells gratefully how she took him up, an uncouth boy, and, rightly thinking he needed contact with the best, coached him in the sonnets of Shakespeare. Soon she developed her gift. She was one of the first of that remarkable band of reviewers recruited at the founding of "The Nation" by Lawrence Godkin and Wendell P. Garrison. For many lean years her tireless pen eked out the family supplies. Like her husband she had revolted against the narrow evangelical creed in which she had been reared. Two persons of genius could hardly have faced the future together on more equal and propitious terms. Clearly their destiny lay beyond Albany, and Martin, who had been a contributor at the National Academy as early as 1857, went to New York in the winter of 1862-63 and painted for a time in the studio of James Smillie. It was two years still before he found the attic studio in the Tenth Street building where he was to work for more than sixteen years, and brought his wife and baby down to lodgings near Union Square. And here opens a new chapter of struggle, chagrin, and withal of joy and great accomplishment.

IN New York the Martins were not unknown. Martin was actually resident in town, at 485 Greenwich Street, when, in 1857, he made his first Academy exhibit. During the winter or two when he worked in Smillie's studio in the old University Building, he had already begun to meet the painters and writers of the city. And Mrs. Martin, who for several years had been reviewing for the "Leader" and "Round Table" was at least a name to the *literati.* Thus they came uncommonly well accredited to a city extraordinarily hospitable to its artists. In those days people gladly paid admission to see a single big picture of Church or Bierstadt, while the amiable Kensett reaped an annual golden harvest for his gently idyllic coast and lake scenes. Indeed social and financial success was not the exception but the rule among Academicians of those days. In 1868 Martin was elected an Associate of the Academy, and his way should have been plain. As a matter of fact, between his painting and Mrs. Martin's writing they did not do badly. For years, she writes, their income ran beyond two thousand dollars. That was a decent living as things then went, yet they were never really at ease. In debt when they started, there was I suppose no time thereafter when they were quite clear. Neither, I judge, was capable of strict management. Meals occurred—or failed to do so. A guest at a belated supper still remembers the "moonlight lamb." It was Mrs. Mar-

tin's cheerful name for a pale undercooked joint more notable for exceptional hue than for toothsomeness. Martin's heart was in his dreams and in his gorgeous tavern times, hers was in her writing and in new and keen religious experiences which he did not share. Between them, things went after a fashion, and the two boys somehow came up, but from all accounts the housekeeping on both sides must have been, as one chooses to regard it, a sublime or a pathetic muddle. And though all the best latchstrings were out, neither Martin nor his wife was capable of pulling them with the requisite alacrity. New York wanted not only pictures on its walls but artists in its drawing rooms, and Martin abhorred such payment with his person. In addition Martin soon committed the unpardonable offence of changing an approved style. By the early seventies he was affecting colors not usually seen in nature or permitted in Academy pictures. Thus he got the repute of being a sort of eccentric amateur, and his product, as compared with the unchanging excellence of Kensett, Church, or Durand, seemed undesirable either for possession or investment. And Martin's inspiration was painfully intermittent. He was slow to follow up any occasional success. In fact his idleness, which early became legendary, has been unduly emphasized. An amusing pencil sketch by Edward Gay is called "Homer Hard at Work." It shows several lads of the Albany group busily sketching while Homer slumbers peacefully in the sun. Of course the fallow periods were not neces-

sarily wasted. To an associate who twitted him for a summer passed without sketching Martin jauntily remarked that he had been "soaking it all in." To one of dull visual memory the process may well have seemed preposterous. As a matter of fact the numerous careful sketches of the sixties disprove the legend of idleness, while spells of apparent inertness were often followed by periods of intense production. Still Martin's irregularity was incorrigible and inconvenient enough. To gentle pressure from his wife in the slack time about 1880 preceding the flight to France, he responded pathetically, "I cannot paint. I do not know where the impulse comes from, nor why it stays away. All I know is that when it comes I can do nothing else but paint, when it goes I can do nothing but dawdle." Upon the straitened home conditions that naturally resulted I have no wish to dwell. A letter dated February 1st, 1873, to an old Albany friend, Dr. Jacob S. Mosher, says all that need be said on this argument—

> "Dear Mosher—Is there any way of inducing —— to send for his picture? my mother is very sick and I have not seen her in more than a year and I can't go up and leave ——'s money unreceived and unpaid out, for there are great clammors from the populace of creditors.
>
> "It is better to be in hell than in art."

The letter which in impetuous disregard of punctuation and venial lapses in spelling is characteristic, ends in quite cheerful vein with an invitation to the Century

Club and the statement that "pleasure of course is the real business of life." It suggests both Martin's chronic embarrassments and that conspiracy of friendship by which he after all occasionally sold a picture and was tided over to the years that saw the masterpieces.

For a leisurely biographer these friends of Martin's would afford a delightful chapter. Chief among them was John Richard Dennett, one of the most brilliant in that great line of Whig-Radical writers who for over a century have upheld the moral and literary distinction of the *Evening Post.* Dennett died in 1874, and oblivion, the swift meed of the higher journalist, soon overtook his fame. But for Martin, Dennett remained a kind of standard by which mind and character might be tested. In April, 1875, Martin writes to Dr. Mosher at Staten Island—

> "I want to come down to your house on Sat. evening and stay over Sunday and I want to bring Brownell.
>
> "I don't know if you are acquainted with B: he is City Editor of the World, but, what is of more consequence, he is rather the finest minded young man I know since Dennett's time."

This was fourteen years before the finest minded of our American critics had fully shown his hand in "French Traits." It was the beginning of a friendship of singular and reciprocal devotedness. From the early seventies or earlier must date the comradeship with the editor and the art critic Montgomery Schuyler and with his cousin Roosevelt Schuyler, always alluded

to in Martin's letters as "Robo." With his courtly neighbor in the Tenth Street Studio Building, La Farge, Martin was always in close relations. One would have delighted to share their talk. What a perfect foil for the explosive and often pertinently slangy wit of Martin must have been the golden unruffled urbanity of the most finely civilized of American artists! With another neighbor, the untamable Winslow Homer, a tacit friendliness was long maintained. Then there was the generous fellow-Albanian, Dr. Mosher, the Quarantine Physician, who took Martin to England in 1876, and ever offered him at the charming house at Staten Island, a refuge for sketching or talk or rest. In August of 1872 we find Martin at New Haven visiting the poet-revolutionist and accomplished wood engraver, W. J. Linton. Dr. D. M. Stimson and his beautiful wife, whose musical talent the Martins especially enjoyed, were later intimates. In the summer of 1879, Martin and Dr. Stimson cruised the lower St. Lawrence and the Saguenay together in a *chaloupe.* The trip is commemorated by certain delightful sketches which remain among Dr. Stimson's many souvenirs of taste in life and in art. So one might go on, but perhaps the chief intimacies of the early time have been mentioned. Martin's election to the Century Club in 1866 —what confidence those reverend signors showed in this capricious youngster of thirty-two!—made him the fellow on easy terms of many of the best minds of the city, and since his capacity for friendship held

undiminished by years or weakness, no complete reckoning of his mates is possible. Other friends of the gray, later years shall appear in their turn. For the moment, I have wished only to hint at the substantial solace that such friendships brought to Martin in these years of unrelieved straitness at home and of frequent misgivings as to his art itself.

I hesitate to add that this solace was all the more necessary because the home itself no longer presented quite a united front. Yet why hesitate over a rather important fact which Mrs. Martin herself has avowed in all simplicity? We have seen that husband and wife at first shared the agnosticism proper to so many good minds that had fed on Darwin's "Origins of Species" and Herbert Spencer's "First Principles." In Homer Martin's case there resulted the sturdy yet tolerant scepticism in which he lived and died. Mrs. Martin, on the contrary, after her father's death in 1866, passed through a religious crisis which terminated in 1870 with her baptism into the Roman Catholic faith. She had consulted the sympathetic La Farge in her perplexity, and her conversion was effected by his friend, the saintly Father Hecker of the Paulists, in whose church she was received as a proselyte. She writes of herself and her husband in this connection—

> "The subjects which interested me most after 1870 never interested him at all. Until then we had been turning our intellectual searchlights in every conceivable direction. At that time mine steadied on its proper centre and veered no more."

LAKE SANFORD

THE CENTURY ASSOCIATION

Signed at the left, dated 1870, canvas, 25 inches high, 40 inches wide.

And indeed Mrs. Martin's Catholicism assumed the intransigent and highly mystical turn quite usual with converts. These churchly interests overburdened her two novels "Katharine" and "John Van Alstyne's Factory," expressing themselves as well in an unfulfilled intention to enter a convent after her husband should die, and in a futile attempt to effect his conversion in the last days. It would be easy to overpress the importance of this rift. The essential loyalty and affection of the two persisted through the many remaining years of hardship valiantly shared. But it would also be idle to deny a certain impairment of the old intellectual comradeship. Here was a new and refractory element that had never been in the bond. Here was a kind of warrant on his side for enlargement of that high convivial converse which at the best times had maintained a palpable competition with the home life of the Homer Martins. If, nevertheless, the bond held firm, much of the credit was hers. No reader of the "Reminiscence" needs to be assured of the candor, delicacy and strength that were blended in the character of Elizabeth Gilbert Martin.

I may have dwelt overmuch upon the personal side of this fascinating pair, but without some hint of these human interweavings into which were plied the very fibre of the man, how could I hope to trace a course in art, the fitfulness of which corresponds closely with tangled destinies here only shadowed forth?

HOMER MARTIN'S painting falls into fairly definite periods separated by experimental intervals. A precocious and isolated triumph of his youthful manner is "The Old Mill," dated 1860, which betrays perhaps the idyllic influence of the popular Thomas Cole. Some ten years largely devoted to observations and sketching in the Adirondacks lead up to the great mountain and lake views of the early seventies. The period opens in frank emulation of Kensett and ends under the leading of Corot. We may terminate what is really the first period with the English trip of 1876, which brought Martin within reach of the old masters. The ensuing pictures—very few they are—of the late seventies show an increased perfection of tone and a freer handling without much sacrifice of the old blithe color, while the beginnings of a more intimate and less scenic vein are noted in a preference for brook and forest subjects. As a colorist Martin seems to me at his best in this time. The Villerville-Honfleur years, 1882-1886, mark a considerable change in his style. Now first he feels the appeal of a humanized soil. The old thin painting and careful definition give way to bold and synthetic application of the pigment. Color recedes in favor of tone. One may perhaps suspect the influence of Boudin, a native of Honfleur, whose pictures might be seen both there and in the Havre gallery, but the change corresponds to an inner necessity, is merely the culminating

achievement of a life-long striving towards simplicity and unity of effect. In France itself Martin painted little, but saw and thought much. A few exceptional beach and meadow scenes were favorable to the trial of the new method. Its successes were achieved at home in his ten remaining years. New York and St. Paul saw the completion of his great French pictures. To the old Adirondack and Lake Ontario themes the new method was applied triumphantly. Thus Martin's life ends in a true synthesis of all his artistic experience.

With few exceptions Homer Martin's pictures were painted long after the sketches or observations on which they are based. Prolonged meditation and selection are implied even by his early canvases. Let me follow briefly the storing up of these enduring and slowly germinating impressions. From a large collection of sketches in the possession of Mr. William Macbeth it is possible to trace Martin's movements through the summers of the sixties and early seventies. Like most of his contemporaries, he devoted himself to wilderness scenery and by preference to mountains. The Catskills, the White Mountains, and the Adirondacks successively called him. To bring a certain breadth and grandeur out of the confusion of this raw sublimity was the problem to which he set his maturing energies. Church, Bierstadt and Thomas Moran were working along the same lines. But the effects which they sought in multiplication of minutely rendered detail, Martin achieved from the first by arrange-

ment and selection. He had the Turnerian instinct not to let "Nature put him out." The best of Martin's early landscapes is unquestionably "The Old Mill" which, embodying Catskill reminiscences, was painted during several years under liberal conditions for Wm. G. Thomas, Esq., of Albany. It now is in the collection of Lyman Mills, Esq., of Middlefield, Conn. The eye goes back from the dusky boulder-strewn waters below a natural fall, over the ledge where the white stream bends crisply, and beyond forest edges, to a vaporous valley whose interlocking hills finally lose themselves in a misty glow. The initial contrast between the sombre rigidity of the foreground and the vague, leafy expanse of the valley is happily established. The flimsy board mill hazardously set on its declivity gets a strange emphasis and dignity. The actual painting is thin, hard and monotonous. At that time it could not be otherwise. Yet the picture was a remarkable performance for any painter of twenty-four. It is probably the best landscape that had been painted in America up to that date. "The Old Mill" bears in Elizabeth Davis's and Homer Martin's initials and a date Jy (January or July?) 1860, a souvenir of that moment in the studio so delicately recalled by Mrs. Martin. Few American pictures can offer such a combination of artistic and personal interest. It seems to represent a happy culmination in life and art of a period chiefly idyllic. For years Martin was to cultivate a more austere muse.

There is a charming pencil sketch of an elm by a

stone wall made at Salisbury, Conn., in July, 1861, about a fortnight after his marriage. The middle of August found him on the Lower Saranac, the end of the month on the Upper Saranac. It was probably his first trip to the heart of the Adirondacks, and it involved slow progresses, most satisfactory to a sketcher, on foot or by rowboat or stage. His Academy picture of 1861 was called "Among the Lake George Hills," apparently a reminiscence of the brief honeymoon visit at Fort Ann. The new Adirondack impressions worked tardily. It was several years before he settled down to what was to be a lifelong theme. Next summer, 1862, we find him actively sketching in the Gorham region amid the boldest scenery of the White Mountains. His pencil point searches accurately the complicated forms of falling water, of rocky torrent beds, and of tangled uprooted trees. The next summer finds him in the same region exploring the wilderness ravine of the Wild River. Again it was several years before these White Mountain impressions eventuated in some of his best early pictures. From 1864 to 1869 inclusive he seems to have spent all his summers in the Adirondacks, which he explored widely. We find him at various times in the gentle river region, then unscathed by forest fires, about Long Lake, the Racquette River and the Tuppers; among the gorges of the Ausable Lakes, and at Indian Pass. Then the easy levels about the lower Ausable Valley and the gracious splendors of the Lake Placid country engaged

his pencil. His favorite sketching ground and the region that left the deepest impress on his memory seems to have been the forest-bound lakes at the headwaters of the Hudson about Tahawus. Distant glimpses of the bleak levels of Lake Sanford, Lake Henderson and Elk Lake are the themes of some of the best early pictures. On the way to and from his beloved Adirondacks he often looked down the wide ravines to the expanse of Lake Champlain with the blue defile of the Vermont mountains meeting the faraway clouds. Such a reminiscence inspired one of the finest of his early pictures, painted about 1872 and still in the possession of his friend W. C. Brownell.

Martin's whereabouts in the summer of 1870 I have been unable to trace. With 1871 came an unexpected widening of his field. The financier Jay Cooke had organized a tour for certain German bankers who were expected to finance the Northern Pacific. Martin, probably quite as much in his capacity as an entertaining person as otherwise, was invited. He is said to have done a big picture of the new town of Duluth which sorely displeased his promoter patron. Martin painted the group of shanties he saw, making them quite insignificant amid the surrounding spaces of forest and lake. Jay Cooke naturally wished some suggestion of the future metropolitan grandeurs of his terminal city. The picture has disappeared, but I believe we may have the attenuated ghost of it in a rude engraving of Duluth reproduced in Dr. Oberholtzer's excellent biography of Jay Cooke. It is

matter of history that the German bankers, perhaps looking at the then Duluth with Homer Martin's disinterested eyes, did not finance the Northern Pacific.

In the early autumn of 1872 Martin accompanied a railroad survey to Cumberland Gap, Ky., later going over alone into the Smoky Mountains of North Carolina. He writes Mosher of the primitive customs of the mountaineers—"When I return I will tell you how we all slept in one room in the mountains of Kentucky and how the women pretended to cover their eyes with their fingers, just to put on airs and seem modest before city people. What will they do when the railroad introduces more conventionalities?" The only record of this excursion is a prim steel engraving by R. Hinshelwood, in "Picturesque America," volume two. The original picture of the Smoky Mountains with a tiny lake nestling amid the foothills of the great range must have been among the most impressive of Martin's early works. It must have been in 1873 that he visited the melancholy sand dunes of Lake Ontario, for the first and one of the best pictures on this theme is the little canvas dated 1874 in Montgomery Schuyler's possession. It was a kind of scenery that deeply appealed to Martin, and after his art had been subtilized by the French sojourn, he returned several times, and most successfully to these Lake Ontario themes. The experience of this summer furthered a sombre, elegiac taste that was to find its fulfilment some twenty years and more later at the estuary of the Seine and on the moors of Newport.

The sketching habits of Homer Martin varied greatly as he advanced. Until about 1876 he worked with a hard pencil on large sheets of grey paper, about twelve by twenty inches. Most of his Adirondack and White Mountain studies are of this sort, and they would doubtless provoke the pity or the derision of a modern art student, so neglectful are these sketches of mass, values, and all that we look for today. There is nothing but the thin, firm contour embracing impartially far and near objects. Occasionally there is a timid indication of darker masses in middle distance, often the foreground detail of rock or tree forms is delicately and vigorously asserted with the point. More rarely a dab of white tells where the sun strikes reflecting water or mountain top. Yet these thin, oldfashioned studies are not quite negligible. Each is a careful attempt at simplification and arrangement, each may be regarded as a cartoon for a future painting. In short, Homer Martin reversed the common procedure of sketching details and making compositions in the studio. His compositions he sought out of doors and apparently he trusted his memory for details. There are a few early sketches of boulders and fallen trees in torrent beds and a few remarkable drawings of tangled forest interiors, but such minute exercises seem to have been rare. His sketches, as we have seen, are already pictorial; he approaches nature through style.

During this early period he rarely sketched in color, and the memory of forms and colors implied in

SPRING MORNING

COLLECTION OF MONTGOMERY SCHUYLER

Signed at the left, dated 1875, canvas, 12 inches high, 20 inches wide.

LAKE CHAMPLAIN

OWNED BY WILLIAM C. BROWNELL

Canvas, 30 inches high, 50 inches wide.





the canvases of the late sixties and early seventies is indeed extraordinary.

To Whistler and Albert Moore, with whom Martin consorted in London in 1876, this method of working with the pencil point must have seemed grotesquely archaic. From this time Martin begins to use charcoal. Water color he had occasionally employed from the first, and by the late seventies and the Villerville time it becomes a favorite medium. In it he attained great freshness and directness, and a handful of the aquarelles made on the Saguenay and in Normandy must count among his most charming works. The pictorial quality is still strong in these swift notes. His composition sketches of the late seventies and the eighties are mere charcoal rubbings in pocket sketch books. The emphasis is no longer upon contour but upon mass and light and dark. A number of these studies are reproduced in Mrs. Martin's "Reminiscence." They are less remarkable instrinsically than as evidence of Martin's quite portentous visual memory, so slight they seem in comparison with the corresponding finished pictures.

Perhaps the finest canvases of the early New York period are "Lake Sanford," 1870, owned by the Century Club, and "Lake Champlain," painted about 1872, in the collection of W. C. Brownell. Montgomery Schuyler has the first version of "Sand Dunes, Lake Ontario," dated 1874, and a deliciously light little study of the next year, betraying the influence of Corot, and called "Spring Morning." To this

list one might add the stately "Mount Jefferson and Adams" of the Metropolitan Museum, but this fine canvas was considerably repainted long after the date it bears, 1868. All the pictures of the early seventies have common qualities of fine arrangement and color, and common defects of a manipulation rather thin and slow. But in the essentials of simplicty and spaciousness such a picture as "Lake Sanford" is already a masterpiece. It is hard to see how any superior felicity of mere handling, such as we note for example in the quite similar composition of thirty years later, "Adirondack Scenery," could really improve this early picture. Nothing could be finer than the heave of the foreground ledge and the nervous drawing of its fire-blasted spruces, than the stretch of forest, far below and quite endless, holding a bleak lake in its cold embrace and finally losing itself where grey drenched clouds and the evening reek from far mountain sides blend and efface the sky line. The picture conveys the peculiar melancholy of those northern forests ravaged by fire and tempest, by the ax and by their own decay. But the scene yields also the tense exhilaration proper to vast uninhabited spaces, and more specifically, is full of the very chill that rises from these upland forest lakes at nightfall. A picture of this sort should not be measured by the minor dexterities. It is neither more nor less clever than a good Ruysdael and it has much of the sober and studied rightness of his early Rhine subjects.

The joyous counterpart to this pensive masterpiece is Mr. Brownell's "Lake Champlain" which was painted towards 1872. The glory of the picture is in the distance which the reproduction largely misses. Below a radiant blue sky, a file of creamy clouds settles down upon the intensely blue range of the distant Vermont Mountains. Miles nearer, the further shore is olive green. An expanse of lake reflects and fuses opalescently these hues of sky and distant shore. Near at hand a gracious valley descends and broadens to frame the lustrous water. A sapling fringe, outcropping ledges, and fallen timber diversify the foreground. Its colors are silvery greys with touches of deep green. Much of this nearer work recalls the early manner of Corot, whose later feathery silveryness has influenced the treatment of the foliage. But the color has a blitheness and candor quite definitely Martin's own. There is still nothing like formula or decorative artifice. The rare masterpieces of this native type have a beauty of color and an integrity of draughtsmanship not always present in the more famous elegiac compositions that grew out of the years in Normandy.

The influences under which Homer Martin matured may be inferred from these two pictures. George Boughton, in the late fifties, brought over to Albany a small picture by Corot. It was admired by his artist friends, and likely enough Martin's naturally just sense of arrangement was confirmed by this new enthusiasm. Sometime later Launt Thompson met

Corot at Ville d'Avray and afterwards remarked to one of Martin's friends that he painted as if he had been a pupil of Corot. The saying reached Martin tardily and he complained whimsically, "Why didn't Thompson tell me that when it would have done me good?" About 1870 and later the New York dealers were beginning to force the men of 1830 upon a reluctant public. At this time Martin doubtless saw many fine examples of his favorite painter. But it would be easy to exaggerate this influence. Martin kept his love of full color, never merging it completely in tone. What he drew from Corot was chiefly an increased sense for elegance and clarity, and such fastidiousness was innate. One of his few recorded artistic opinions, he was a man who rarely talked shop, is a condemnation of Turner for presuming to hang two of his canvases alongside Claude's incomparable "Seaport." This observation was made in the National Gallery as late as 1892, and it epitomizes the esthetic faith of a lifetime. From what was inchoate, fussy, or sensational, Martin ever shrunk. He was born a classicist, in a manner a Virgilian, and naturally loved the measured serenity of such masters as Claude and Corot.

But a stronger leading came from a far humbler quarter. John F. Kensett is today hardly the shadow of a name; in the sixties and early seventies he lorded it affably among the acknowledged giants of the Hudson River School. There are still good old houses in New York that boast their dozens of Ken-

setts. In some unmentioned limbo the Metropolitan Museum keeps a full score. The pictures left in his studio fetched something more than 150,000 dollars after his death, in 1873. And relatively to his contemporaries he deserved his vogue. Alone among them he realized that a landscape is neither an arboretum nor a topographical display. He had inklings of the principle of harmony in color that runs through nature. Some of the rarer hues of sky and water he at least saw and attempted to capture. Moreover he knew something of the value of silhouette, of the placing of the larger masses. Then he respected the luminous quality of virgin expanses of pigment. He never reduced color to mud on his palette nor tortured it to dullness on the canvas. His best canvases deserve Constable's lefthanded compliment to Turner: they look like big water colors. W. C. Brownell finds to praise in Kensett's landscapes "a certain wholesomeness, and even a soft vivacity that set them in advance of most work that was contemporary with them, and enabled them to be of a real advantage at the time when their vogue was greatest." Kensett possessed a thin but authentic poet's vein quite exceptional in his day and rightly treasured. From the prevailing vices of achromatism and small realism he was completely free. He was the only one of the older artists who was worth imitating, and Homer Martin was about the only painter intelligent enough to grasp that fact. The fine Martins of the early seventies are like glorified Kensetts, Kensetts

with the addition of nerve, substance, and higher seriousness. Once more we see how truly Martin's work was merely the fulfilling in a more critical spirit of the finer part of our national tradition.

As early as 1867, in the second edition of "The Book of the Artists," the amiable Henry T. Tuckerman had found space to note in a single line the promise of Martin's lake scenes. Other recognition was of the scantiest in these early years, but in 1874 he was elected an Academician. It was not much of an honor but it was at least the best the country then afforded. To any man but Martin it would have meant financial success. Being the Ishmaelite he was, he struggled along under an increasing load—his two boys grew faster than sales and prices—until in his fortieth year came an unexpected respite.

PART FIVE

IN 1876 Homer Martin went to England and France with his friend Dr. Jacob S. Mosher. The trip included a visit to Barbizon, but Millet and Rousseau were already gone. Some "pencillings at Saint-Cloud," mentioned by Mrs. Martin, indicate a pilgrimage to the favorite sketching ground of Corot. The holiday included a glimpse of Holland and possibly of Belgium. Most of the time was spent in England in close intimacy with Whistler. The Pennells record with tantalizing brevity Whistler's habit of dining at "a cheap French restaurant good of its kind, with Albert Moore and Homer Martin, a man

in whom he delighted." It was the year before the Ruskin outburst, and many of the soon to be notorious and now famous nocturnes were in the Lindsay Row studio, but Martin's sturdiness prevented his being drawn into a mode which he warmly admired. Unhappily no record survives of the talk of the three friends. Nor do we know what artistic credentials in the way of pictures Martin brought over with him. There is a hint of an exhibition and of favorable press notices which I have not been able to verify. Even more welcome would be some intimation of Martin's reaction to old painting in the National Gallery and the Louvre, and here again is only silence. A fine canvas, "Richmond on Thames," painted after his return, suggests in its beautiful russets and silvers and in a certain demureness the close scrutiny of Constable. But in the main Homer Martin's art remained unperturbed by these crowding new impressions. Indeed it is likely that he frequented the cheap French restaurant and similar resorts "good of their kind" in preference to the galleries and studios. He disliked the formal symmetry of new Paris and adored the casual picturesqueness of London. It looked he used to say, "as if it had been built by individuals at different times."

By the middle of December, 1876, as we learn from a letter to Mosher, Martin had returned to New York very hard up, having been away nearly the whole year. Apparently the pictures, including the splendid "Lake Sanford," which he exhibited at

the Centennial exhibition, Philadelphia, had failed to keep him in memory, nor had absence improved his vogue. It was hard to take hold again. He was more than a year in finishing a large picture of Windsor Castle for Dr. Mosher. It is still in the possession of his son, Dr. Montgomery Mosher, of Albany, New York, and is the most important souvenir of Martin's English days. Martin liked it, for, writing December 5th, 1877, he begged it for exhibition in the following terms—

> "Next Sat night, dear Mosher is meeting night at the Century at which I would like to make an exhibition of your picture and yourself—both in a highly varnished condition."

He was one of the few Academicians asked to join the Society of American Artists in 1877. Rather few of his pictures can with certainty be dated in the late seventies, but his exhibition titles suggest a more intimate sort of landscape, forest interiors and brook scenes, while a few fine canvases dated 1880 and the next year show that through this interval his art had notably progressed. There is a brook scene dated 1881, in a private collection, which catches all the mystery of filtering light, and presents the most beautiful and summary indications for tangling weeds, underbrush, moving water, and lichened venerable boulders. As compared with the pictures of only a few years earlier the touch is loose, the variety of texture remarkable. The little world below the leaf canopy has its specific and palpable atmos-

ANDANTE: FIFTH SYMPHONY

IN A PRIVATE COLLECTION

Signed and dated 1880, canvas, 20 inches high, 30 inches wide.

phere, to which is sacrificed enumeration of detail and something of precision.

A more discreet mastery of these new expedients is revealed in the admirable canvas of 1880, "Andante: Fifth Symphony." A forest brook broadens into a shallow pool to which vague reflections of rocks and trees and broken sky lend depth and mystery. In the upper vista, boulders glint in the half-light before a screen of misty foliage. The rock-rimmed bounds of the pool and some foreground weeds are accented with great vigor, while everything in the forest above is soft and evanescent. Tree trunks loom spectrally before a general forest gloom which is enlivened by the scarlet flash of a precociously autumnal maple. The general color is extraordinarily modulated greys qualified by broad touches of russet and green. In its contrasts of preciseness and mystery the picture obeys the Japanese law that every composition must be clearly divided into a masculine and a feminine part. And it should be noted that the exceedingly delicate painting of the forest is perfectly lucid. The spectator who is a woodsman will have no difficulty in reading these subtle indications quite literally as pine, maple or poplar. While the painting is very thin, the manipulation is most skillful and varied. Perfect tone is achieved without the sacrifice of local color. The picture exemplifies a momentary perfection, the high point in the delicate naturalism in which Martin had begun. The analogy of the stream broadening amid

forest loveliness to the great Andante is by no means fanciful. In some ways the picture is more attractive than his more highly prized later work with its broader manipulation of paint and its more conventionally asserted tone. I sometimes wonder what would have happened had the public seen fit to support work of this excellence and made it possible for Homer Martin to reach his full development in his own land. What is certain is that all the expedients and ideals which characterize the French period are clearly enough foreshadowed in this canvas of 1880. The last phase of Homer Martin is less exotic than it seems.

No complete record of Homer Martin's movements in the years from 1877 to 1881 can be made. Some time in 1878 he was sketching at Concord under the guidance of Frank B. Sanborn who still recalls Martin's agreeable manners and the somewhat grotesque figure he cut in the evening dress that was scrupulously worn at all Concord teas and dinners. "Scribner's Monthly" for February, 1879, presents the fruits of this expedition in certain woodcut illustrations to Mr. Sanborn's article "The Homes and Haunts of Emerson." The sketches surely attributable to Martin are the fine designs. "Walden Pond," "Concord from Lee's Hill," "Graves of Hawthorne and Thoreau," and the less interesting drawing of the "Old Manse." The original drawings have disappeared, the best impressions of the cuts may be seen in Mr. Sanborn's book "Homes and Haunts of the

Elder Poets," which perhaps contains other illustrations from Martin's hand. It was a kind of task that he disliked—rather foolishly thinking it beneath his dignity as an artist—and in which he did not shine. Still the chance of his having done this commission acceptably influenced his whole later life. It was as an illustrator that he undertook the trip which led to the years in Normandy.

In the summer of 1879 he was the guest of Dr. D. M. Stimson in a boating trip on the lower St. Lawrence and Saguenay. There remain a few fine sketches in charcoal and in water color, with a sheaf of drier pencil sketches of Quebec, which may have been intended for illustration. The water colors of this year show that partial subordination of frank color to tone which we have already noticed in the paintings of a year or two later. If Mrs. Martin is right in supposing one of the finest Newport landscapes to have been painted in England in 1881 or 1882, we may safely set Martin's first studies on the Newport moors in the late seventies. For the rest, he was always a great figure in the Century Club, then in its old East Fifteenth Street house, while the proverbial wolf continued as of yore to keep the Martin family well within ear and eye-shot.

PART SIX

THERE is an ironic principle by which our major opportunities in life are often determined by our minor capacities. One is a lawyer because some cas-

ual paradox was heard at the right or the wrong time, a clergyman on the strength of an exceptional sally in dialectic, a diplomat because one's boots, gloves, and conversation opportunely pleased some great lady. Our inner and intimate impulsions we rarely are free to obey. Practically we do what it suits the momentary convenience of somebody or other to believe we are fit for. So when in October, 1881, Homer Martin sailed for a long visit to England he went not as one of the foremost landscape painters of his time but as a tolerable illustrator of literary sites. He was commissioned by the "Century Magazine" to sketch in George Eliot's Warwickshire, and his needs did not permit him to decline an uncongenial task. In London he renewed the old friendship with Whistler and had the freedom of the famous yellow studio at Chelsea. Being once asked to criticize its very perfect appointments, he remarked the absence of scissors. When asked What for? he performed an expressive pantomime with his fingers upon the edge of a much frayed cuff. Though become a celebrity of the first water, "Jimmy" was still the best of comrades. The poet W. E. Henley, too, was an intimate. Yet Martin seems to have passed his first eight months in England in frequent lethargy and despondency. The Edmund Gosses, at whose home he often visited, were impressed by the discrepancy between his sordid appearance and evident distinction. To Mr. Gosse he seemed "muffled" and quite discouraged. In any case almost no work was done, and the illustrations lagged. Mrs.

Martin's advent in July, 1882, may have been somewhat in the nature of a relief expedition. She was promptly taken to see "Jimmy" whose fantastic pose and setting reduced her to silence, and the visit was not repeated.

After her coming, the sketches of "George Eliot's Country" were quickly dispatched. Accompanied by Rose C. Kingsley's text they may be seen in the "Century" Vol. xxx (1885) where they seem indeed a slight occasion for a notable shift in Homer Martin's fate. Alfred Parsons's drawings for the same article are distinguished both by their blither mood and by his monogram. It was the intention of the Martins to return in the Autumn of 1882, but the chance of an attractive invitation to Normandy and of an old friend as traveling companion took them across the channel to Honfleur. Mrs. Martin records her thrill when she awoke to see the tawny cliffs of the Conqueror's port. Their objective was the hospitable thatched farmhouse at Pennedepie occupied by William J. Hennessy and his wife. Hennessy was an old friend. Successful both as painter and illustrator, he was a pioneer of that harmless type of American talent which seeks its ease and local color abroad. Besides, he was a neighborly person and a celebrity in the region.

What had begun as a brief visit led to more than four years of work and play in Normandy. By the winter of 1882 the Martins were comfortably settled at Villerville, near Mme. Cornu's hotel where excel-

lent lunches and dinners were provided on quite indefinite credit. Barring debt, which was after all their chronic condition, it was a time of uncommon ease and of closer companionship. Their French acquaintances were unfailing in kindness. Pleasant American and English friends were often staying or visiting at this picturesque village. C. S. Rinehart, whose Paris studio was headquarters for Martin in his occasional runs to town, summered at Villerville with his family. The elder Forbes-Robertsons had a villa there. Old American friends like the Brownells halted and loved the peace and beauty of the place. There was a constant coming and going of odd, diverting people, some of whom still live quaintly in Mrs. Martin's "Reminiscence." It was a life both serene and sufficiently varied. What the appeal of the soft beauty of the place was to Homer Martin we may best realize in the delightful sketch of Villerville which his wife contributed to the "Catholic World" of February 1884. As motto she chose the line

"What little town by river or sea shore"

from Keats's "Ode to a Grecian Urn." Her husband, on persuasion, would recite this and other odes of the poet. Observing that in France, unlike America, there is no gulf between figure painting and landscape, she dwells upon the appeal of a soil immemorially inhabited.

"Here all is congruous—occupation, costume, attitude; nay as one leaves the precincts of the town

and strolls through lane or byway, even the houses and steep-roofed barns fit into the landscape as naturally and harmoniously as the trees, the influence of whose graceful forms seems, indeed, to have sunk into the souls of their rustic architects."

With such impressions overwhelming him it is significant that Martin, who was a competent draughtsman of the figure, in the work of Norman inspiration stops usually with mere symbols of habitation. In two or three pictures we have mussel gatherers striding over twilight sands, but usually there are mere hints of villages seen down the "water lanes" or across the river, or at most some collective token of man's tenure, like the ivy-grown Church of Criqueboeuf or an old manor mouldering amid funereal neglected poplars. So much Martin conceded to the spirit of the place, but to the end he preferred to be alone with nature, and some of the latest pictures done after his return to America merit Dennett's comment upon the early work in looking as if no one but God and the painter had seen them.

What Villerville meant in the way of cultivating a sense of color and of atmospheric gradation already keen and delicate, may again best be gathered from Mrs. Martin's graceful phrases:

"All this external loveliness which helps to endear their native soil to men is here in the full of perfection—The blue sea stretching to the horizon or limited by the rosy gray of headlands and the purple of distant shores; the swell of sunny up-

lands; the spread of flowery meadows; the shadow of graceful trees; the generous fields from which the peasants further inland draw the fruits and grains which supplement a never-failing harvest from the deep, over all the wide-arching, grey blueness of the Norman sky."

The whole article is truly, as Mr. Brownell said when he read the manuscript, a Homer Martin landscape in words. I cannot wonder that certain editors preferred the text to the rather slight sketches illustrating it, which indeed were never published. I would gladly quote at length the passages in which she describes some of the scenes glorified by her husband's art, but have space only for the few words on nightfall which seem tinged from Martin's very palette:

"The day deepens while we watch her. The sea faints into a pale, ineffable, ghostly blue under the gaze of the sun, the near pools glow with pink and salmon tints: Havre still hides behind a veil of haze, through which as twilight closes, the twin electric light of Cape La Hève shines faintly."

This passage and that which precedes it form virtually a repertory of the few small pictures and sketches which Martin did in the four Norman years. Except for the large canvas "Mussel Gatherers," for which a charming commentary might be drawn from his wife's article, and the more impressive "Low Tide, Villerville," 1884, the finest fruits of these new observations were characteristically matured in after years

THE MUSSEL GATHERERS

COLLECTION OF WILLIAM T. EVANS

Signed at the right, canvas, 28 inches high, 46 inches wide.

SAND DUNES, LAKE ONTARIO

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Signed and dated 1887, canvas, 36 inches high, 59 inches wide.





of reflection and memory. Technically Martin was far from ill-prepared to cope with this new beauty. The art of elimination he had already mastered. Witness a fine canvas called "Morning" dated 1881 and exhibited that year in the Society of American Artists. Specific form is reduced to the merest indication, it seems as if nothing were left but glorious color and vast space. In no sense, then, did Homer Martin go to school in France. Indeed he was already the peer of the best living landscape painters there, only Puvis seeming clearly his superior. Martin merely found himself before a more saturated and unified color than that to which he was accustomed in America, and simply made certain inevitable technical changes.

> "The paint" (writes Mr. Isham in his "History of American Painting") "is laid on heavily, sometimes with the palette knife; the drawing while true and subtle is generalized and simplified to the last degree; the sky and water instead of smooth, thin, single tints are a mass of heavy interwoven strokes of different tones. At base the change is not so great—hardly more than the use of the palette knife, larger brushes or more fully charged with color and, a looser touch. The real essentials (the feeling for the relations of mass, for the exact difference of tone between the sky and the solid earth, the sense of subtle color) are the same, and under every change of surface remains the same deep, grave melancholy, sobering but not saddening, which is the keynote of Martin's work."

To this admirable analysis little need be added. Mr. Isham finds that Monet and his group, with their doctrine of the single impression, may have been a clarifying influence, though Martin never accepted the prismatic formulas of impressionism. That he had weighed the *pointilliste* technique carefully may be assumed. Howard Russell Butler visited Martin in Honfleur in 1886 and saw a picture started. The paint was laid on in a coarse mosaic of the primary colors. It seems that under most of the late pictures lies a highly colored preparation that was painted out into a nearly uniform tone. In a few cases, notably in "Honfleur Light," at the Century Club, the underpainting of yellow has struck through to the detriment of the effect. For the rest, Martin practiced, not broken color, after the new fashion, but broken tone. To Thomas B. Clarke he once wrote of his love of "putting little bits of paints alongside of each other, to try and make them twinkle." This was a foible shared by many a famous predecessor, for example Vermeer and Guardi. Such rather dry technical matters reveal after all the astute eclecticism of the man. He was never perturbed by his admirations, but quietly intent on what might aid in the better expression of his own vision. A certain coolheadedness is, indeed, the quality which seems to make Homer Martin at his rare best more than a shade the superior of the generally abler and always more exuberant Inness.

At Villerville the Martins spent nineteen months,

moving to neighboring Honfleur for the sake of better studio accommodations in the early summer of 1884. Twenty years later in her widowhood the Villerville time seemed to Mrs. Martin "the most tranquil and satisfactory period of our life together." But tranquillity was, as usual, a relative term for them. In April, 1883, early in the Villerville days, she wrote to Dr. Mosher from the lodging in the Jardin Madame (this address affixed on a rudely printed paster). "At present we are entirely out of funds. . . . Want of money in a foreign country may also mean want of bread." But she continues, after the topic of delayed or failing remittances is exhaused, that Homer "has been working very hard all winter and has done some of his best work. . . . If we can live at all here, he will do things worth speaking about." Fortunately they were able to stay on and justify this prediction. If the two years and more at Honfleur were less idyllic than those at Villerville, they were still productive. Mrs. Martin was indefatigable, writing no less than three novels, two of which saw the light respectively in "Lippincott's" and in the "Catholic World." Martin painted fitfully and continued to elaborate his new method in a "well lighted and spacious" studio on a wharf commanding the busy prospect of the harbor. The old sketching grounds were still accessible enough. A new and close friendship was made with the United States Consul F. F. Du Fais, whose son still possesses in a "Distant View of Caen" evidence of Homer Martin's wider wanderings in Nor-

mandy. In the Summer of 1886 he went on to the Salon, putting up with his friend Rinehart. An unexpected and opportune remittance enabled Mrs. Martin to follow him. He met her with some astonishment at the entrance of the exhibition where she had been waiting for several hours. That trip may be considered as a valedictory celebration. She was already planning to resume the fight in New York. In August, 1886, she sailed, and on December 12th he joined her for a new trial of the old fortunes. The French period had been chiefly a germinative interval, but he brought back "The Mussel Gatherers," "Ontario Sand Dunes," now in revised form in the Metropolitan Museum, which had been unaccountably refused at the Salon, and that radiant little masterpiece "Blossoming Trees," and he had in his head besides, half a dozen of the finest landscapes produced in the last quarter of the century.

PART SEVEN

THE old studio in Tenth Street had been abandoned in 1881. So Martin began to work out his Norman memories under rather inconvenient conditions in the family apartment on Sixty-third Street. By midwinter of 1886-87 he was in more suitable quarters in the studio section of West Fifty-fifth. Here, according to Mrs. Martin, the canvas fancifully called "The Sun Worshippers," with others, was painted. "The Sun Worshippers" is one of the few instances in which he sought the overtly picturesque

in nature. We have a line of stunted trees with tops streaming down the wind in obedience to the habitual blast. Beyond is a faint sea and a veiled sky with long, rising cloud streamers. Below is a bit of shaggy moorland. The canvas is long and in its fundamental contrast of green and gold highly decorative. Mrs. Martin's paragraph on the actual look of the trees as they grew near Criqueboeuf may here find a place. "A row of trees bends over to the east with a curious exaggeration of the landward slope of all seaside growths. It would be worth a painter's while to come here at daybreak and catch them all salaaming to the rising sun and getting his early benediction on their topmost branches." Does not the reappearance after four years of this fancy of the wife on the canvas of the husband suggest most eloquently the closeness of their fellowship during the foreign respite? The picture has passed into the collection of Louis Marshall, Esq. "Mussel Gatherers," now in the possession of Wm. T. Evans, Esq., was exhibited in the Academy of 1886. Amid the *plein-airisme* that was become the mode, its subtler qualities of saturated color appear to have passed unnoticed. The rejected Salon picture, "Sand Dunes, Lake Ontario," was taken up again and finished in 1887. In the Metropolitan Museum it now represents the most sublimated phase of Martin's later art. On a visit to the farm of his friend, George Butler, at Croton Falls, N.Y., probably in the Autumn of 1887, Martin painted, and contrary to his wont, entirely in the

open air, the magnificent canvas, "Westchester Hills." Butler, who besides being a very competent painter was a man of taste—evinced domestically in the choice of a beautiful Capriote bride—held the picture for years at a refusal price of six hundred dollars. Exhibited in the Academy of 1888, it was not sold till after Martin's death, and then within a few years, was several times resold at startling advances. It now would presumably fetch the price of a good Rousseau. Late in the eighties, Newport was revisited, and the grave charm of its spacious moors left an abiding impression, resulting in two or three of his finer works, such as the very similar canvases in the Lotos Club and in the collection of Frank L. Babbott, Esq.

It was soon clear that while the return home had brought a complete renewal of the old fellowships, Martin was rather farther away than ever from making any public effect. Indeed the times were cruel for pretty much all our painters. Between the inevitable revolt against the Hudson River School, the feud of Academy and Society, and the sway of the international dealers, American pictures were no longer freely bought. Then recurrent innovations in the art had a perturbing influence. New York was ready to chat about the various isms, but hardly to invest money in them. What friendship could do was done for Homer Martin, even criticism began to be more generous. His position as an acknowledged celebrity was easily regained, but in spite of a re-

markable production of pictures, his earnings were actually more uncertain than in the earlier New York days. Like other returned exiles, the Martins found it hard to settle. In 1890 they moved to a house in West Fifty-ninth Street, alongside the Convent of the Paulists. To Mrs. Martin, as a devotee, the proximity to her favorite church was most grateful. He endured with good humor associations with which his sympathy must have been slight. In this house were painted "Normandy Trees," in the Wilstach collection, Philadelphia, a gracious picture and more solidly constructed than most of the later works; "Honfleur Light," in the Century Club; the "Old Manor," belonging to Dr. D. M. Stimson, a most poetical work which will engage our especial attention, and what is perhaps his best known picture, "Criqueboeuf Church," now owned by Samuel Untermeyer, Esq. During these busy years Martin's health failed alarmingly. His sight grew so poor that the outlines had to be traced for him on the canvas. The nerve of one eye was found to be actually dead, the other eye was blurred by a cataract; yet his art and courage rose superior to these obstacles. When his wife, perhaps surmising it might be his last picture, congratulated him in 1895 upon the completion of the noble canvas, "Adirondack Scenery," he replied, "I have learned to paint at last. If I were quite blind now, and knew just where the colors were on my palette, I could express myself." Since Homer Martin's frailties are patent, it is well to mark the power

of mind and memory and the reserve of moral fortitude implied in this quiet remark.

In the hope of recuperation he went to England in the Summer of 1892. It was the purchase of "Honfleur Light" by subscription of some fellow-members of the Century Club that made the trip possible. The picture hangs in the Club in a room which also contains "Lake Sanford" of 1870. The confrontation is most interesting and, I feel, rather damaging to the later picture. In spite of its mystery and more stately melancholy, "Honfleur Lights" lacks something of the well knit reality of the neighboring canvas. An imperious mood is become a little negligent or scornful of the substances on which after all its vision is based. Much of the English holiday was spent with his old friend, Mr. George Chalmers, at Bournemouth. There was a short excursion to the old haunts about Honfleur. He looked up Mlle. Lemonnier, the postmistress at Villerville, who ten years earlier had insisted on teaching French to Mrs. Martin "for love or not at all." He visited also at Havre Mme. Agnes Farley, who had been a pet disciple of the Martins in literature and art during the Villerville days. She was shocked, she writes me, to find him "very broken and almost blind." Together they revisited the old sketching grounds on the Côte de Grace, but "it was rather a dreary pilgrimage."

Martin returned to New York in the Autumn to find his wife under strain to the danger-point. A cumulation of inordinate hack-work and worry of all

WESTCHESTER HILLS

COLLECTION OF DANIEL GUGGENHEIM

Signed at the right, canvas, 32 inches high, 60 inches wide.



sorts had at length shaken an indomitable spirit. In December of 1892 she fled in the hope of rest to the home of her eldest son, Ralph, at St. Paul, where, after a nervous collapse, she gradually regained strength for a new ordeal. Between ill health and lack of money, her husband found it impossible longer to maintain the struggle in New York. So in June, 1893, he followed her, taking with him in unfinished condition the "Criqueboeuf Church" and the "View on the Seine," which he and his wife used to call "The Harp of the Winds." The Metropolitan Museum might well adopt this more suggestive title for the most poetical of Martin's works.

From letters to his friends, Thomas B. Clarke, who in these years handled the sale of the pictures, and F. F. Du Fais, it would be possible to set forth the remaining years in all their drab details. A mere look at the heavy, sprawling, tremulous handwriting tells much. Hand and eye are both failing. He complains whimsically that private letters have to be read to him. He works in a tormenting side-light. Still more trying is the lack of companionship. "I never before knew," he writes to Clarke, "the importance of having some one, who knows what pictures are, look in occasionally and say something in the way of criticism." Isolated by their pride and poverty amid a prosperous and hospitable community, it was the first time in more than thirty years that the Martins had not been besought by the best people. And yet the lack of congenial associations meant concentra-

tion, which, with heroic abstinence from his beloved beer, made the Saint Paul years extraordinarily productive. Such a last rally as Homer Martin made enlarges one's faith in human nature; so little it was to be predicted of a man nearly blind, shattered in health, and baffled throughout a life time. Very soon he sent back the "Criqueboeuf Church" and, for a wonder, sold it. In the Academy of 1894 was shown "A Distant View of Caen," painted for Du Fais and the last picture publicly exhibited. In the Spring of 1894 some friends brought him on for a Century Club reunion and a six weeks' visit. They said good-bye never expecting to see him again, so clearly measured seemed his strength and his days. It was perhaps the glow of finding himself still valued among his peers, perhaps alluring hopes of financial success, later held out to him—whatever it may have been that fanned the old fires, the Summer of 1895 witnessed a true resurrection. In a quiet farm house near St. Paul he finished the three great canvases, "The Harp of the Winds," "Adirondack Scenery," and "The Normandy Farm." The two former pictures had been long sketched on the canvas and represent his maturest workmanship. With justifiable pride he wrote to Clarke a few months after the pictures had gone on, "I do believe I have a grip on technique quite beyond any former work."

Whatever hopes were based on these three splendid works were soon disillusioned. The pictures made their momentary furore chiefly among critics and

similar impecunious folk. No sale ensued, and the advances on account left Martin deeper in debt than ever. Something of the old wit and fortitude still flickers in the letters to Clarke and Du Fais, but the blackest moods of self abasement and more rarely of suspicion of others begin to appear. He worked persistently at three new pictures, but with scant results, each day scraping out the work of the day before. Only one more picture was ever finished, a Newport scene signed in the last months of 1896. As early as February 21, 1896, he hints to Clarke of "operations flavored with despair." In May he writes to Du Fais, "the foe is eating the gizzard out of me." Cancer of the throat was, though unacknowledged, already present.

There are pathetic and witty passages in the letters of the last year which should find a place in a biography. Here I may recall only a passage in which he regards his pictures as a means of saying to his intimates things that could not otherwise be expressed. Aside from this, he is indifferent as to the fate of his works. To a criticism that a Newport picture has too yellow a sky he retorts, "Of course the bald statement that a picture is too any color is ridiculous." On news of bad luck in selling pictures, he consoles himself with the reflection that "ownership of pictures is a figment of the brain; you can't own pictures any more than you can poetry or music." Always in these last months his thought goes back to the comrades in New York. There was a moment when the

hopes of the Martin family rose high over a Montana gold mine in which they had a slender investment. "Its success," he writes to Clarke in February, 1896, "will make the Martins so rich that I can have as good a skylight as any other man, can paint those scientific pictures I have been bragging about, can give them, pay them is better, to my long suffering friends as I have dreamed of doing, and when the tardy clamorers come for them you and I can tell them, almost in one breath, that we used to sell pictures." The same letter contains a very modest definition of financial ease as understood by the recent creator of the "Harp of the Winds." "I ought to have at least $100 a month to be easy." It may also be remarked that this humorous vision of the "tardy clamorers" for the pictures was quite literally verified within a couple of years, when his ears heard no longer either the appalling discord or the heartening acclaim of our world.

That his last days were spent in relative comfort and ease was due not to the Montana mine, nor yet to his wife's devoted drudgery as a proof-reader, but to the timely aid of the old New York friends. Martin's response to Du Fais, who with Brownell was the transmitter of the testimonial, is in Mrs. Martin's handwriting and runs—"The exquisite delight of finding myself so kindly regarded by my friends puts all other considerations and values in the situation quite in the background." In the same letter Mrs. Martin meets the wishes of the movers of the sub-

scription that it should be regarded as an advance or loan with the happy suggestion that the sum be applied to the purchase of the "Seine picture," which was "the most satisfactory of his pictures from the time it was outlined on the canvas." In this way "The Harp of the Winds" came into the Metropolitan Museum, through the generosity, as one may read on the label, of "A Group of Gentlemen."

The last line I have seen from Martin's hand is dated on the eve of the New Year of 1897. It is to Du Fais, regrets a dismal letter of the day before, and tells the good news that Brownell has reported the sale of the Newport picture to Babbott. A stricken man, Homer Martin was to die in something like prosperity. From that New Year the tide seemed to turn in his favor, nor has it ebbed since. Of this bettered destiny he can hardly have been conscious. What had been merely the dull discomfort in the throat changed into a mercifully brief space of corroding agony, and on February 12th, 1897, the much worn man entered into rest unnoticed. The New York papers provided not even the usual perfunctory obituary. His body lies in St. Paul. Mrs. Martin, as I write, lives on tranquilly with her son at Los Angeles, but the days when she was the helpmate of Homer Martin have become dim to her.

THE man being safely dead, his work began to look desirable. Within five or six years the prices of fine Martins were read no longer in hundreds but in thousands. Take the case of what Martin once ruefully described to Clarke as "a big unavailable picture"—to wit, "Westchester Hills." After its exhibition in the Academy of 1888 it was stored with a painter friend George Butler, who hoped some day to pay six hundred dollars for it. On Martin's death this refusal naturally terminated, and two years later Mr. William T. Evans "after long hesitation" acquired the unavailable picture for one thousand dollars. At his auction sale in 1900 his temerity was rewarded by a price of four thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars. In 1902, in the Milliken sale, the picture, with the stigma of unavailability now thoroughly removed, fetched five thousand three hundred dollars. Should the purchaser, Daniel Guggenheim, Esq., wish to send it again to the auction room, it would doubtless bring three or four times that sum.

Become a recognized and valuable commodity, and the supply being quite limited, his pictures soon received the flattery of imitation. From 1903 or so there was a steady production of rather specious false Martins which found a ready sale at prices to which he himself had never aspired. At a club exhibition given in honor of his memory about this time, a third of the entries were spurious. Two such pictures had

the transient distinction of being accepted by the Nation and hung in The National Gallery at Washington. The scandal came to a head in the Evans-Clausen trial in 1907, and though the verdict was inconclusive, the facts were patent. Today he who buys a Martin of the later manner should look well to its pedigree and even more keenly at the picture itself.

The paradox that persons who claimed the repute of amateurs were paying great prices for, say, the quite third-rate landscapes of the Duprés, while "Westchester Hills," the "Harp of the Winds," and "Adirondack Scenery" could have been had for a song, I merely note without comment. My subject is a particular artist and not the various pseudo-esthetic forms of human vanity. But it is fair to add that the fault did not lie with American criticism. From 1877 on, Martin's pictures were usually praised and often in the warmest terms. In the case of Brownell, writing in these years for the "World," friendship and critical conviction concurred in enthusiasm. Successive critics of the "Evening Post," among them John Van Dyke and Russell Sturgis, were avowed Martinites. William M. Laffan of the "Sun" was of the same feeling. Somewhat later Charles de Kay continued the tradition in the "Times." Walter Cook was an anti-Martinite but his pungent girds in the "Tribune" probably helped rather than harmed the victim. Equally appreciative with the daily press were the art magazines. The influential "Art Jour-

nal," in April, 1878, praised the tragic force of a Lake Ontario picture exhibited in the Society and concluded, "as a purely impressionist picture, this takes its place with the dreamy distances of Corot or the silver nocturnes of Whistler." In the short-lived but ably edited "Art Review," S. W. G. Benjamin wrote most appreciatively of Martin's exhibits of 1880 and 1881. Homer Martin, in short, had about all the support that an artist has a right to expect from contemporary criticism, and it availed him nothing. Which reminds me of an experience in the studio of a landscape painter where I may have betrayed some undue sense of critical responsibility. He bade me be of easy mind, for in forty years he had never heard of a picture being sold or remaining unsold by reason of anything critic ever said or wrote. Whether or no my friend was right in a statement at once reassuring and humiliating to a professional critic, it is certain that the great art patrons of Homer Martin's time were influenced neither by professional criticism nor by the verdict of the most cultured taste. It was the day of dealer-made collections, and while many dealers made these very well, they all preferred foreign pictures, especially the staple product of the Institute of France and, by way of novelty, the painters of Barbizon. The genial old days, when New York as a matter of course bought, largely out of friendship, the paintings of the Academicians, had passed. The new patronage of American art inaugurated by astute *marchand-amateurs* and far-sighted dealers did not

AN OLD MANOR

COLLECTION OF DR. D. M. STIMSON

Canvas, 25 inches high, 38 inches wide.

HONFLEUR LIGHT

THE CENTURY ASSOCIATION

Signed at the right, canvas, 24 inches high, 36 inches wide.





begin till Martin was gone. While in fairness something of Homer Martin's ill fortune must be laid to his own irregularities, I am driven to the rather lame conclusion that his only unpardonable fault was to have been born of original talent in a poor family at the wrong time. The wistful resignation with which Martin accepted public neglect means perhaps less personal humility than a lucid perception of the fact that without extraordinary business capacity or luck, neither of which he ever had, no mere landscape painter could hope to thrive.

PART NINE

HOMER MARTIN once maintained among friends who were discussing the subject of story-telling pictures, that there was in every picture something of this. And being asked to prove it from his own "Westchester Hills," he answered, "Oh, the old home has been deserted, and all the family has gone West along that road." The retort was only half a jest. The pathos of the scene does largely depend upon the impression that these fields and slopes and groves are derelict, abandoned by man and not quite given back to Nature. No picture of Homer Martin is merely retinal and objective after approved modern formulas. He was too deeply conscious of the vicissitudes of the earth for that. There is in the Adirondack and Lake Ontario subjects a sense of the moulding or fracturing agency of storm, of the passing of fire or rain, of the furrowing of gullies and crumbling

of ledges. A kind of pity for the old earth blended with awe at the immemorial processes of growth and decay is ever present. In the Normandy pictures we have the effort of man arresting and guiding these vicissitudes, and there is usually a hint of the refractoriness of the earth to such pains. His favorite hour and light are those of early evening, when, undisturbed by the shifting pageantry of the sun, one may meditate upon the uncertain tenure that man shares with mute creation. There are pictures of the early time and a few late ones, like "Sun Worshippers," in which he yields himself gladly to the intoxication of frank color and to the joy of sunlight. But this festal and candid mood is at all times exceptional. He brings usually to the observation and pictorial interpretation of nature, a definite and poetical mood full of that noble and measured melancholy, which in poetry we call elegiac. It was the mood proper to a lover of Keats and Beethoven.

Every picture of Martin, then, represents a complex of recurrent moods, observations and memories. His tradition is the contemplative one and absolutely alien to the instantaneous reactions of impressionism. And his habit of constantly returning to old themes is significant. Between 1874 and 1887 there must be four or five versions of "Sand Dunes, Lake Ontario," each one coming a little nearer the light poise of the remote dunes between sky and water, and each working out finer symbols of swart aridity in the forms of the foreground trees. Indeed every picture of his

is quite slowly and thoughtfully elaborated as a conscious arrangement. The matter stands very plain in his own words to Thomas B. Clarke in a letter dated February 25, 1896. "As to the pictures in sight . . . in sight, that is to me, the 28x40" (probably Mr. Babbott's "Newport") "is all thought out except one or two cloud forms which trouble me greatly. The larger picture in which I intend to sum up about what I think of the woods" (apparently it was never finished) "needs considerable scene shifting before the curtain can be raised. . . . It might be ready for the Autumn openings if I settle on the arrangement of the parts soon." Such testimony as to the wholly conscious intellectuality of Homer Martin's invention dispenses me from further analysis. I wish in lieu of a formal criticism to trace the quality of the inspiration and pictorial idiom in three consummate examples,—"An Old Manor House," "The Harp of the Winds," and "Adirondack Scenery."

Beneath a troubled gray sky, in which a single flash of red gives the last signal of dying day, the old manor house stands amid a copse of leafless, untrimmed poplars. Vacant doors and windows are so many dark gashes in the warm-brown, crumbling wall. The sordid trees are swarthy and their branches give forth a peculiar murkiness that invests the deserted mansion. It seems as if some memory of Poe's "House of Usher" must have been in the artist's mind as he painted, so exactly does he make visual the familiar words:

"About the whole mansion and domain there hung

an atmosphere peculiar to themselves and their immediate vicinity—an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of Heaven, but which had reeked up from the decayed trees, and the gray wall, and the silent tarn,—a pestilent and mystic vapor, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued."

Between the spectator and the lonely manor lies a lustrous, stagnant pool, marbled strangely with confused reflections from shore and sky, and containing more clearly the chill image of the desolate house. Such a house and such a pool exist at Criqueboeuf, but again the conviction imposes itself that this is "The bleak and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled lustre" by the "House of Usher," wherein one might look shudderingly upon "the remodelled and inverted images of the gray sedges, and the ghastly tree stems, and the vacant and eye-like windows." Yet the mood of this intensely tragic picture is not one of horror. There is a kind of overwhelming pity in it, as if the departing gleam were the sign of countless days that had gone down in sadness; the old manor among its sordid imprisoning trees, a veritable symbol of all glories that have departed. For a melancholy, entirely composed and noble, yet moving to the verge of tears, I hardly know in the whole range of landscape art an analogy for this picture. To one who feels its emotional content, it will seem sheerest pedantry to remark its soberly splendid interweaving of warm browns and luminous grays, or such felicities of arrangement as

the proportions of the pool to the rest, the massing of the trees against the sky, and the liberating lift of the land at the right.

Unless it be "Criquebeouf Church," the "Harp of the Winds" is Homer Martin's most famous picture, as it is his most admired and accessible. That appropriate title, which he and his wife always used between themselves, he declined to use publicly, fearing lest it seem too sentimental. "But that," writes his wife, "was what it meant to him, for he was thinking of music all the while he was painting it." She tells us, too, that the trees were originally much higher, and, with their reflection in the slow current, assumed more explicitly the form of a harp. The change she regretted, in which I think few will follow her, for nothing could be more satisfyingly gracious than this file of slender tufted trees bending suavely with the curve of a broadening river. Upstream, the light touches the white-washed houses of a village. A slight dip in the low skyline suggests the upper winding course of the quiet river. The clouded sky, shot with pale bars of gold and silver over a tenuous blue, has that peculiar diagonal rise, which gives height and movement. Silvery gray is the prevailing tone, into which are worked discreet enrichments of yellow, dull green, and blue. The rough and lustreless surface is remarkably luminous. A sober preciousness, both earthy and ethereal, comparable to the mysterious bloom of fine Japanese pottery, is characteristic of the whole effect. One may note the ingenuity by which

all the curves which are arbitrary elements in a beautiful pattern in plane are also essential factors in depth. Such harmonizing of arabesque with spatial suggestion is of the very essence of fine composition. Better than such pedantries, it may be simply to say that no landscape in the Metropolitan Museum will more immediately arrest the attention, and few will better endure prolonged contemplation.

"Adirondack Scenery" is perhaps the best epitome of Homer Martin's entire achievement, being based on memories that had been turned over and refined for more than thirty years. Its direct prototype was a small canvas called the "Source of the Hudson." It is the richest in color of all the later works and possibly the broadest and most skilful in handling. The eye looks beyond gray, flat ledges over a stretch of brown second-growth, amid which flash rare scarlet maples, beyond a shallow valley and a shaggy distant ridge, to a steely lake where all the mountain slopes converge. The further ascent catches a golden permeating bloom from a dense vapor bank that recoils from the higher barrier and casts down a shadow. These vapors surge forward in a lurid and swirling yellow mass, thinning at the sides and top into the serene blue of a rain-washed sky. A peculiar and soothing gravity, proper to the vast spaces represented, is the ruling impression. One would be dull of heart indeed who could stand before this picture without a renewed and consoling awe at the secular balance of earth, air, and water which brings beauty

out of ravage and calm out of strife. Nor is there anything mystic or far-fetched about the picture. Its highly generalized forms are firm, its textures of forest, rock, and cloud, unexaggeratedly veracious. I think it would appeal almost as strongly to a woodsman as to a poet.

Unless I have grossly misread these pictures, we have to do with a most distinguished kind of imagination, with a mind keenly lyrical and meditative. The inspiration is not so much various as authentic and deep. From beginning to end of Homer Martin's painting we have much the same kind of transaction between a sensitive clairvoyant spirit and natural appearances. What he seeks in nature is solace, suspension of the will, expansion of the contemplative self. The mood I have in passing called Virgilian. It might be well to add—of a Virgil exiled in an untamed land. The feeling is essentially pagan, and not to be confused with the Wordsworthian and mystical temper which it superficially recalls, nor with the sentimental primitivism of the Rousseauists. It is somewhat stoical, valuing Nature, chiefly as a means for regaining in tranquillity the form of one's own spirit. The sentiment might be paralleled in Milton and is not uncommon in the eighteenth century poets, such as Gray, though then it sometimes implies a quite unstoical revolt against society. I find nothing of this Rousseauism in Martin. It seems to me that his temper is quite classically poised and his real concern with the governance of his own soul. We find

a similar stoicism paradoxically interblent with the Christianity of Bryant. One of his best poems, "A Winter Piece," a poem that curiously anticipates much recent pictorial concern with Winter scenery, breathes in a somewhat simpler tone much of the mood of Homer Martin's pictures.

> The time has been that these wild solitudes,
> Yet beautiful as wild, were trod by me
> Oftener than now, and when the ills of life
> Had chafed my spirit—when the unsteady pulse
> Beat with strange flutterings—I would wander
> forth
> And seek the woods. The sunshine on my path
> Was to me a friend. The swelling hills,
> The quiet dells retiring far between,
> With gentle invitation to explore
> Their windings, were a calm society
> That talked with me and soothed me.

Such a mood may sometimes be merely the evasion of a weak spirit, but Homer Martin, if wayward was not weak. He expresses a solace that strong spirits have often felt in Nature, a sentiment that has been the staple of poetry from the days of the sages of India and China, through Oedipus at Colonus and the stoics, to our own century. His vein is narrow but in the finest tradition and of the most evident personal authenticity.

Yet, saving only La Farge and Vedder, I have never heard a painter speak in unreserved praise of Mar-

ADIRONDACK SCENERY

COLLECTION OF MRS. SAMUEL UNTERMYER

Signed at the right, canvas, 29 inches high, 40 inches wide.



tin's work, and I have heard painters whose opinions are usually worth while declare that it is negligible. No formal rebuttal of such opinions seems to me necessary, but a word as to standards may be in order. The value of any work of art, I believe, is solely that it should communicate a choice and desirable emotion. This is true even of so-called impersonal art. In Manet, for example, quite the most objective of painters, one shares a tense and distinguished curiosity. Now the person who gets no such choice and desirable emotion from the art of Homer Martin, may, if he be assured that his sensibilities have reached their limit of education, quite properly neglect work from which he derives no pleasure. Which comes to saying that the reasonable criticism of a work of art is always of its emotional content, and so in a manner of the artist himself. It is always competent to declare that this emotional content, however strongly and consistently expressed, does violence to our own nature and is for us undesirable. Indeed any other unfavorable criticism of a work of art seems in the nature of things superfluous and absurd.

If this very simple principle were understood, it would save much confusion. There is abroad an ultra-romantic assumption that we are always bound to accept the point of view of the artist but perfectly at liberty to object to his technique. Precisely the reverse is the case. His point of view, having all sorts of general and vital implications, we are entirely free to accept or reject, being bound merely to understand it,

while the particular rhetoric of his expression, being idiosyncratic and necessary, we must accept, and the less we bother about it the better. To do otherwise is to miss the whole point. You may, for instance, attack Claude as a poor imagination, but not as a flimsy executant. Yet, many admit his poetry and deplore his tree-forms or the thinness of his pigment or what not. Which is one of the more asininely specious forms of esthetic pedantry.

With men for whom a George Fuller or a Eugène Carrière is primarily a feeble draughtsman I cannot argue. Let them come out honestly and say they think the sentiment is forced or cheap, and we can self-respectingly agree to disagree. And my grudge against my painter friends who decry Homer Martin is that they do not discuss his sentiment, but assert some weakness in his diction. He splits his pictorial infinitives or ends his phrases feebly with a preposition, or otherwise breaks the rules. Whose rules? I admire those who know so exactly how a vision they themselves have never entertained save through what they call a defective form of expression should be conveyed. Yet there is a professional realm in which these technical matters are subject of legitimate interest. Only we should keep in mind that such considerations are subesthetic and quite secondary. Taking the work of Homer Martin on this lower plane, it is obvious that he is not, strictly speaking, a great painter. The zest, variety, swiftness, and deftness of the consummate practitioner he has fitfully,

and on the whole, rarely. An impeccable sense of mass and close-knit atmospheric balance was not his. Tryon, who, in some respects, may be regarded as his closest living affinity, is more skilful and curious in these matters. I have sometimes felt that Henry Wolf's admirable woodcut copy of the "Harp of the Winds" was just a shade more substantial and fine than the original. Yet it is precisely the twilight, and occasionally unsure vision of Homer Martin that we value. And the unsureness in no wise affects what he has to say to us. Beautiful pattern, vibrating color, distinguished mood—all these things are precisely and fully conveyed. What matters it while the "Harp of the Winds" balances rhythmically in pellucid air and shimmering water that perhaps you couldn't walk on the nearer strand? The fact that you conceive the feat shows that you have missed the picture entirely.

To those who are sensitive to the gracious and highbred melancholy of Homer Martin's work, this explanation will be superfluous. To others it may be said that his alleged technical weaknesses are of the emotional essence and stand or fall with the emotion itself. He was a lover of clear thinking, and this must be my excuse for a digression that may clear up a confused attitude towards his work. He seems to me a singularly appealing type of the minor artist, the kind one loves better than those of accredited greatness. For variety, copiousness and vitality, Inness, Winslow Homer, and perhaps Wyant are his superiors; any of these comes nearer to meeting the usual notion

of the great painter, and yet I would sacrifice all their work if I might keep the "Manor House," or "Adirondack Scenery." Not because I underrate these large and genial personalities just mentioned, but because I believe that the future is more likely to duplicate approximately their type of vision and degree of skill. I imagine Homer Martin's fame as compared with theirs will suffer vicissitudes. He is more aloof and complicated; they more simply explicable and more nearly related to average wholesome predilections. They are more democratic and of our land and time, he more aristocratic and more free of the whole world of contemplation, I can imagine Homer Martin being at times forgotten. I am equally certain that he will be perenially rediscovered, and always with that thrill which the finding of some bygone poet of minor but delicately certain flight brings to the man of open heart and sympathetic imagination.

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